

EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE_ Children Education

Aurhors: Di Domenico Francesca, Fatigati Luisa, Ferrara Federica - Archipicchia_Architettura per Bambini

Title: *Architecture: experience and education for children.*

Abstract:

This paper examines one of the possible relationships between education and architecture, that is architectural education and didactic experimentation for children, supporting the research through the experience and the educational path built by three women architect in the architectural laboratories with Neapolitan children¹.

The architecture considered as a construction of space, it is a *potential stimulus to the movement: a building is an incitement to action, a stage for the movement*².

The space is not something external and independent from us: the space exists as it is occupied by our body, it is an entity that cannot disregard the body living in it and animating it (M. Merleau-Ponty).

We live in architecture and we experience it over and over again: therefore, architecture is essentially regarded as an experience, not just as knowledge.

As an experience, architecture keeps its value (educational and formative value of the space and of its construction) and its potential.

Regarding the child as an inhabitant and a protagonist, we felt the necessity to bring architecture to schools and out of schools, in open laboratories in the city, in order to provide children some critical tools to analyze the world around them and "make it theirs".

In our opinion, architecture is the best tool to foster children's sense of identity and their respect for places, the best means to increase the awareness needed to become responsible citizens.

Children's approach to architecture is therefore an important educational and didactic occasion: architecture involves different fields of knowledge (science, art, technology, sociology, mathematics, design...) and keeps the signs of the past, which shaped the world and its history – memory and culture. It is a background where we do everything and so it represents a useful tool to build a collective identity.

We think that through architectural education it is possible to take everyday life spaces back and to begin to imagine a new dimension of inhabiting the world. In our opinion, this is an architectural education's specific domain which broadens opportunities for projects, experience and possible transformations of reality and of the languages used to describe it: most of all, it introduces a different experience of the space, which could enrich the world we live in through desire, doubt, fear, dreams and feelings.

According to our experience, the best place for this kind of communication is the laboratory, regarded as a perfect place for research and experimentation, where children "*shape their experience*" (Loris Malaguzzi, 1995) and play a central role in the process of creation.

In architecture, if we rework the experience of the famous Munari's laboratories "Giocare con l'arte" (Playing with art), a contemporary approach based on the "make to learn" principle, we work on two inseparable aspects: the "interactive" tale and the creative lab. "Abstract" concepts such as heritage, safeguard, environmental sustainability, history and so on can get a concrete meaning and become part of our everyday activities. Playing and creating places which simulate real ones, children meet the adult world and reflect on the architectural objects they saw, on the places they visited or heard about. In doing so, the spaces that seemed to be obscure become less mysterious. These laboratories represent a special place of interaction, where the children choose to participate and do more activities than those suggested by institutional teaching, increasing their opportunities to learn and grow up.

This *project* reflects on the possibility of providing the tools needed to encourage children's attachment to the city, regarded as a complex element and observed from different points of view, in order to make it gradually become "their own" city and, at the same time, to promote a *culture* of space, as an awareness heritage.

¹ Since its foundation, the cultural association *Archipicchia_Architettura per Bambini* has been interested in activities which involve children in studying architecture and in participatory urban planning: its main aim is to spread the didactic and formative value of architecture and urban heritage, and to promote knowledge and valorization of historical, artistic and, most of all, architectural heritage, as a constituent element of culture.

² Yudell, R.J. (1977) Il movimento del corpo. In Bloomer, Kent C. e Moore, C.W., *Body, Memory and Architecture*. Yale University.